1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

before it can be moved further. The same accumulation of snow then begins again with each fragment.

We can readily see that this system was one of great flexibility. The rules of the system were fairly definite, and the principles of agnatic descent and primogeniture were never violated. Yet it was a system very susceptible to manipulation, and one appropriate to a society with a rapidly expanding population recruited mainly by capture. The relationships between a man and his wives, his sons, and his other dependants provided the basis for differentiation within his segment, but they did not determine in advance which wife should be made leader of a bevy, which bevy should get most dependants, which of his younger sons he should favour, which dependants he would appoint as lieutenants.

Without a continual inflow of captives this wide pattern of segmentation might not have produced anything more than a lineage system on the same lines as the Zulu and Swazi. The captives were the bulk which swelled the segments, which benefited one segment at the expense of another. This system provided quasi-agnatic affiliation to people whose actual parentage was unknown or irrelevant. Because of this source of supply, much greater segmentation was achieved in each generation than was possible in an orthodox lineage system. The whole system lasted only seventy-seven years for the Fort Jameson group, corresponding roughly to three generations, yet almost the whole population of the Ngoni groups stemming from Zwangendaba, numbering perhaps half a million people, could at the end of that time trace quasi-agnatic ascent back to him or his forebears.

Membership of age-sets gave rise to one set of bonds which cut across the lines of segmentary division; those bonds created by marriage gave rise to another. A man in one segment was linked by ties of affinity to men in several others, and because of these ties interacted with them on formal and informal occasions, exchanged cattle with them, and had a joint interest with them in their common descendants. Though segments were not exogamous, a wife from a structurally distant segment had in general a higher status and was more likely to be selected as leader of a bevy than was one from the same minor segment as her husband. Within a segment a son of the lord might marry the daughter of a lieutenant, and lieutenants sometimes married daughters of their lord, thus blending the bonds of affinity with those of quasi-agnation. As the heads of segments, married women played a more important role than we usually associate with them in strongly patrilineal societies. The lady of a segment retained her connexion with the segments

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167 464 [567] which we shall be more directly concerned with the smaller groupings of Ngoni society. There are, however, a few points that must be mentioned here.

In Fort Jameson and in a few of the towns on the Northern Rhodesia railway line there are Ngoni members of the Native Urban Courts. These posts are largely in the gift of the Native Authority although they are not paid by the Native Treasury. The man recommended by the Paramount Chief to the Administration is usually the one appointed, and he acts as a representative of the Native Authority in the town as well as carrying out his duties in the court. He is likely to act as host when a chief visits his town, and messages are sometimes sent through him to men and women who are wanted in connexion with affairs in Ngoniland.

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Every few years or so a chief goes to visit the towns. Here he is received by his people and those of other Ngoni counties, and may be given substantial presents. The Paramount Chief is sometimes called to Lusaka by the Administration to attend some function, and newly appointed chiefs go to a school near there, where courses of instruction are held for them. Thus although migrants may leave their villages and not return to them for many years, there are opportunities for them to keep in touch with rural happenings. Most of their contacts are with their kinsfolk, who visit them or write to them, but there are also these links with the political system of the tribe. When political offices have to be filled, not only Ngoni living rurally are considered but also those in the towns whose whereabouts are known. Sometimes the fare is sent for the lorry journey back to Fort Jameson if the town-dweller has no money.

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There is little contact between the Fort Jameson group and other Ngoni groups. In 1914 envoys came from the northern Nyasaland group in order, it is said, formally to confirm Mpezeni as Paramount Chief of the Fort Jameson group, but there does not seem to have been any subsequent contact between the heads of the two groups. Individuals from northern Nyasaland from time to time find their way into Fort Jameson District, usually while searching for work on the tobacco farms, in the same way as men from other tribes. These immigrants may persuade some of their relatives to join them and so build up sufficient following to set themselves up as village headmen.

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Contact is naturally closer with the two Nyasaland counties formerly under Mpezeni and many Ngoni in Northern Rhodesia have relatives across the border. The border twists and turns, and there is no physical indication of its existence on the ground save

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for a few heaps of stones hidden among the trees on the tops of hills. People visit back and forth freely, except for the control imposed at the customs barrier on the one lorry road. Many people grow vegetables in Nyasaland, where there is more land, and sell them in Northern Rhodesia, where there is a better market.

While this territorial proximity gives rise to a multitude of ties linking individuals across the border, it does not lead to new political relations between the counties with a common boundary. Such political relations as do persist are survivals from the old order. Although the formal structure of the Native Court system, as determined by the Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia Administrations, does not permit it, cases sometimes come on appeal from the Nyasaland counties to Mpezeni. There is official visiting between chiefs across the border, and when the Paramount Chief is short of food he may ask the Nyasaland chiefs to send him a few baskets of maize. But despite the nearness of the Nyasaland chiefs to Mpezeni in spatial terms, their political interests lie mainly in the opposite direction. They are the only two Ngoni chiefs in that district of Nyasaland and most of the chiefs whom they meet are Cewa. Their Administration is separate from that in Northern Rhodesia, their laws are different, and they look towards Zomba rather than Lusaka as the seat of Administrative power. We have noted how Mpezeni I contemplated moving into Nyasaland in 1897. As late as 1922, when the Native Reserve scheme was under discussion, Mpezeni II made some preliminary soundings on moving across the border, but already by 1946 such projects were overshadowed by the prospects of federation for the two countries of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The people of the two Nyasaland counties are subject to the same general influences as are their Northern Rhodesia neighbours in such matters as increasing dependence on an exchange economy and the development of a cognatic or omni-directional kinship system in which links can be traced through spouses as well as through fathers or mothers. Yet even in economic activity there are significant differences. In Nyasaland, Africans grow tobacco for sale, while the Ngoni in Northern Rhodesia are not able to do so; recruiting for the Rand gold-mines is allowed in Nyasaland and prohibited in most of Northern Rhodesia, including the Fort Jameson area.

The annual meetings of the African Provincial Council of the Eastern Province are attended by representatives from each tribe in the province, two people from Fort Jameson township, the Provincial Commissioner and sometimes a representative of the

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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173 Ngoni tradition placed the departure of the two main groups under the leadership of Zwangendaba Jere and Ngwana Maseko during Shaka's wars, according to some traditions just before, and to others just after, the death of Zwide, ruler of the Ndwandwe people. The separate departure of the two Ngoni groups which later formed the two kingdoms was determined partly by their separate leadership under the Jere and Maseko clans, partly by their march by different routes to the Zambesi and after crossing it; and partly by the clan descent names of the Swazi element in the two kingdoms, which with few exceptions were different.

[533] Two traditional songs, sung at marriages, at dances at the Paramounts' villages, and the first in the church of the Scottish mission at Ekwendeni in north Nyasaland, reminded the Ngoni of their departure from Natal, of their separation from the Ndwandwe people under Zwide, and of the hazards of a small military band fighting its way northwards.

539 All the nations
Are gathered together against us.
How shall we fight?
They are called together against us.
Whence shall we summon help?
The big husky ones, ho!
They are called together against us.
We are reinforced by whom?

It is because of Zwide, chief of the Ndwandwe people
That though I lie down I cannot sleep.
O Zwide, chief of the Ndwandwe people!
Though I lie down I cannot sleep.
Shaka scatters us among the forests of Soshangane land.

173 There were several informants in both Ngoni kingdoms who had preserved the story of the departure of the Ngoni from the south. Y. M. Cibambo in his book gathered together the traditions and gave what he considered the most authentic version of the departure. One [114] text from the northern kingdom is given here, partly because it was typical of the kind of material Cibambo had to work on, and also because the author, Mlonyeni Jere, had heard it from his mother who, as a young girl, had lived at the court of Zwangendaba. The text gives the genealogy of Zwangendaba, and the connexion of his line with Zwide, ruler of the Ndwandwe people. It emphasizes the immediate cause of Zwangendaba's departure—namely the fear of meeting Shaka and his warriors in open battle, and the fact that he was not called a chief until he had made a breach with Zwide. The summons to the [57] mourning for his uncle Mafu, which he ignored, was considered by the Ngoni to be the final act by which Zwangendaba cut himself off from

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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his kinsfolk who remained in the south. This breach with his former kin and the assumption of chieftainship marked out Zwangendaba as a leader and his followers as a separate group.

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The Departure of the Ngoni
by Mlonyeni Jere

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Zwangendaba was the son of Hlacwayo, the son of Magangata, the son of Magalela, the son of Cenge of Enhlekisweni.

Magangata had three sons, they were borne by one mother. The first-born was Gumede, the second was Hlacwayo, and the third was Mafu. Gumede did not marry, he hated them badly, he did not eat the food that was cooked by the women, and the same Gumede was the chief of all Magangata's sons. He did not love his brother Hlacwayo. He said that Hlacwayo was black and also he was dwarf, but he said Mafu will be the one to take his chieftainship. Mafu was refusing to take that possession while his brother was still alive and he said that though the people say that Hlacwayo is black, he is not black to me but he is red. And also though they say he is dwarf he is not dwarf to me, but he is tall. When Gumede died the chieftainship was taken by Hlacwayo and Mafu was his second since they were all born from one mother.

Magalela was at Ndwandwe the village of Langa. Langa was the father of Zwide and Zwide was a very bad chief. Zwide did not treat Zwangendaba well. When Hlacwayo died his chieftainship was taken by Zwangendaba his son. Zwide was called Nxumalo, and these people of Nxumalo were strong men there in Natal and some were afraid of them.

Dingiswayo, the son of Jobe of Elangeni, went to Zwide for a visit at Ndwandwe. As soon as he appeared Zwide caught him and killed him. When Shaka heard that Zwide had killed Dingiswayo, he grew angry for Shaka had grown up there at Dingiswayo's. He said ' Zwide has killed the chief who taught me how to fight better.' At the same time he ordered warriors to go and fight against Zwide at Ndwandwe.

Zwangendaba refused to fight with Shaka because he heard the story of Shaka, that he was a great warrior. Then he told his father Mafu that he must go away from Zwide. Zwide was troubling the Jere people. When they cooked beer he was snatching it, and when a man married a good girl he was snatching her, and when they killed a cow he was snatching the meat and taking it to Ndwandwe. When Zwide quarrelled with Shaka, Zwangendaba was glad that he had found a way of going away from Zwide. Zwide fought against Shaka and Zwangendaba ran away. The leaving of Zwangendaba nobody knew and nobody followed him. Also there was no one to follow him for Zwide was busy with war against Shaka.

They sent a message to Zwangendaba that Mafu had died:—'Come to the mourning.' Zwangendaba did not go back to the mourning. All the people who were in Mafu's villages did not follow Zwangendaba. They also went on their own way, and we do not know where they went. Zwangendaba came with only two sons of Mafu, Cenge and Mgayi. Thus many children of Mafu stayed in Natal.

Zwangendaba was with his brother Ntabeni when leaving Natal.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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in the political organization. Some of these officials were also members of Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans, but many were not. The officials served the Paramount in his court and his administration, and also the chiefs, and formed the lines of communication between them. This created a network of relationships between the Paramount and the chiefs at the top level, and between the chiefs and the village headmen under them at the lower level. From this network were excluded, in the northern kingdom, all the *alumuzana* and, in the central kingdom, all those *alumuzana* who were not chiefs. In the two kingdoms the *alumuzana* exercised unofficial control over a varying number of villages, and were inclined to assert their social superiority because they were excluded from official recognition.

The foundations of the political structure within which the ruling aristocracy operated were a series of related institutions which will be described and analysed later in the book, but which must be referred to here, partly in order to explain the terminology used. The South-eastern Bantu, whose culture the Ngoni brought with them, had an institution in all important villages known as 'houses', which was a grouping of huts and of the wives owning them round the hut of one or more of the leading women. This institution, with its variations among the southern and northern Nguni people, was described by Mrs. Hoernlé in the chapter on 'Social Organization' in *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa*.[1] The Ngoni institution of houses had developed from the basic pattern among the South-eastern Bantu into an independent form. In the first place it was only found in relation to the Paramount, the chiefs and leading men of the royal clan, and the *alumuzana*. It did not, as in South Africa, form the basic pattern of all villages in the Ngoni kingdoms. Where, as in most villages owned by *alumuzana*, mixed ethnic groups lived together, the house system existed only for the head of the clan, his brothers and his successor. It was specifically an Ngoni institution in the cultural and social sense. In the second place, the terms 'right-hand' and 'left-hand' house, common among the South-eastern Bantu, were not used by the Ngoni in the 1930's. The two terms they used were the 'big house' and the '*gogo* house', and I propose to use these terms here. The principle behind the use of these terms was that the big house was the one from which the heir should come to succeed the Paramount, the chief, or the *mulumuzana*. The *gogo* house was the one which was responsible for maintaining tradition and performing ritual.

Another institution, closely related to that of the houses, was the *lusungulu* and *gogo* villages. The Paramounts, the chiefs, and the leading *alumuzana*, when they succeeded their father after his death, moved out of his village and made their own new village, or took their households

[1] Schapera, I. (ed.). *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa*. Routledge, 1937, chap. IV.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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and settled where another village already existed.[1] In both forms, this new settlement was called the *lusungulu* village, 'the one which goes in front'; and the village which was left was known as the *gogo* village. This use of the term *gogo* (literally 'grandparent') for house and village had a common basic connotation. It expressed the concept of being left behind to look after something, the *gogo* house being passed over for the heir to the Paramountcy or chieftainship but charged with ritual and ceremonial duties; and the *gogo* village being left behind to take care of the traditions and generally also of most of the widows of the deceased Paramount or chief. Each *lusungulu* village eventually divided on the death of its owner, part 'going forward' with the new successor, part remaining behind. The main groups in the village which went ahead or which remained were the houses connected with the new Paramount or chief or *mulumuzana* and those connected with his dead father. In the chapter on houses (Chapter III, Part III) this process will be examined in greater detail.

The third related institution was the provision for guarding the spirit of a dead Paramount or chief and those of some leading *alumuzana*. A senior woman was always guardian of such a spirit and in her hut were kept the ritual objects: spear, wooden dish, baskets, fire-stick, which were used in sacrifices to the ancestors. The guardianship of the spirit of a dead Paramount was always associated with the village which had been his *lusungulu*. His corpse was buried on the edge of the kraal containing the cattle of the house where he had grown up, and this village became the *gogo* village associated with him, where his spirit was guarded in a hut, probably though not necessarily belonging to one of his widows. The recognition of such a woman guardian was a matter for selection and appointment, and was the responsibility of the senior men of the *gogo* house in that village in consultation with the senior men of the *gogo* house in the dead man's father's village. The concept of guarding the spirits of important men, and the means by which such guardianship was practised, will be more fully discussed in Part IV in connexion with the ancestor cult.

THE NGONI KINGDOMS AND AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

In the final section of this chapter we shall look at the Ngoni kingdoms in their relationship to other African kingdoms and states such as those described in *African Political Systems*.[2] A methodological problem arises here. In this study a number of references are made to the Ngoni kingdoms in pre-European times, especially in connexion

[1] This form of the institution was found in densely populated areas and the incoming households dominated the original ones.

[2] Fortes, M., & Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (ed.). *African Political Systems*. O.U.P., 1940 pp. 9–23.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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with the military organization and the Paramountcy. The main emphasis in the study is, however, on the Ngoni kingdoms in the 1930's, when the Paramount and the administrative organization under him were recognized by the Nyasaland government. Though certain elements in the kingdoms, as for example the position and authority of the *ahamuzana*, were not recognized by the ordinance, the supreme authority of the Paramounts and the position of their appeal courts received additional support from the colonial officials, from the financial basis of the administration, and from the many new responsibilities of the Paramount for his people illustrated by the bye-laws made and the welfare measures carried out.

It is the Ngoni kingdoms as they functioned in the 1930's which will be compared with other African political systems, bearing in mind all the time that behind the Ngoni kingdoms lay the authority and power of the colonial government. The comparison will be made with the general characteristics of what were called by the editors of *African Political Systems*, in their introductory essay, 'Group A systems', and the references will be to the criteria and concepts in that introduction.

The main characteristics cited of the Group A systems were all to be found in the Ngoni kingdoms: centralized authority, administrative machinery and judicial institutions. These will be the chief material in Part II of this book on the Ngoni political system. In *African Political Systems* the editors stated that all the societies described in the book which were in the category of Group A systems were 'an amalgam of different peoples, each aware of its unique origin and history, and all except the Zulu and Bemba are still today culturally heterogenous'. Such a definition was appropriate for the Ngoni kingdoms, where political authority was wielded over several different peoples, as the ethnic grouping in the 1945 census showed, and where there was cultural heterogeneity among the different peoples. This second characteristic will be examined more fully in Chapter III of this section, dealing with Ngoni culture. To the factor of diversity within the Ngoni kingdoms should be added two other points made by the editors towards the end of their introduction where they said: 'Community of language and culture does not necessarily give rise to political unity, any more than linguistic and cultural dissimilarity prevents political unity.' In the next chapter we shall be discussing the relation of language and culture among the Ngoni, and between them and other Nyasaland peoples. The second point in the essay which is also applicable to the Ngoni kingdoms and their neighbours was stated in these terms: 'The overlapping and interlocking of societies is due to the fact that where political relations end is not the point at which all social relations cease.' The relevance of this statement to the Ngoni in Nyasaland has already been mentioned in connexion with the visiting which goes on between individuals from the Ngoni kingdoms and states. It

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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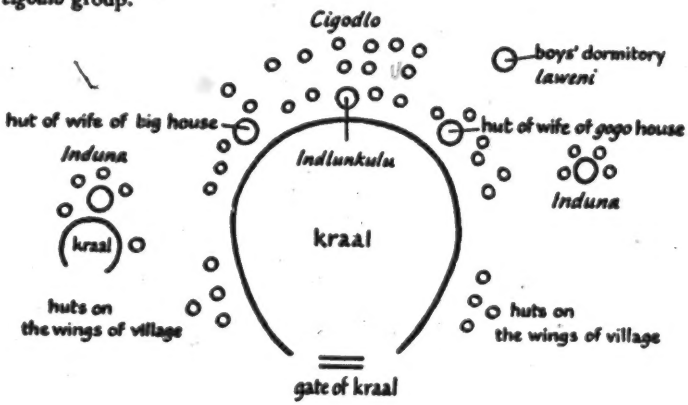
was still more clearly demonstrated by the attitude of the Ngoni 'of the dispersion', who returned for visits, some frequently and others at varying intervals, to their former homes though they were no longer in a political sense subjects of the Ngoni Paramount.

In the Group A systems, not only is the Paramount the political head of a culturally and ethnically heterogeneous state, but he is also a territorial ruler, and everyone living within the boundaries of his state is his subject. This was peculiarly a characteristic of the so-called conquest states, when effective administrative control was established within recognized boundaries after the conquest or surrender of neighbouring peoples. In the chapter on the military organization of the Ngoni, it will be seen how the nature of the military tenure of *alumuzana*, and the relation of groups of conquered villages known as *amilaga* to the central villages of the Paramount and *alumuzana*, emphasized the limits within which Ngoni authority was effective. One of the often repeated grievances of the older Ngoni was that the Europeans 'arrived too soon', before the Ngoni were able to establish effective authority over the whole country.

Two further points emerge in the introductory essay to *African Political Systems* which relate to the balance of forces within the Group A type of state and to the position of the Paramount. Both these points will be illustrated in Part II. The first concerns the relationship of the subordinate chiefs (called 'local chiefs' in the essay) to the central authority. They represented the central authority in the areas where they ruled, and they represented the people under them and their needs to the central authority. When the older Ngoni were talking about the Paramount in pre-European days, much emphasis was laid on his control of the chiefs and *alumuzana*, and on the obligation they felt to visit the Paramount in his village frequently, in order that they might appear to be carrying out his orders and not usurping undue authority. The older Ngoni also laid stress on the accessibility of the Paramount to all his people, provided—and it was an important proviso—that a man came to him with an intermediary, either his headman or his *mulumuzana*.

The final point of comparison between Group A systems and the Ngoni kingdoms is the mystical values bound up with kingship. This will be discussed in the chapter on the Paramount (Chapter II, Part II) and it is related also to the ancestor cult. The Ngoni Paramounts were more than ruling monarchs; they were the symbol of the unity of their state; in pre-European days the Paramount was the head of the army; and the ritual at the accession and at the death of a Paramount was related to the fertility of the land and the prosperity of the people.

621 the main circle round the kraal to emphasize its connexion with the *cigodlo* group.



621 The group referred to as 'a house' has already been defined in its
571 relation to the Paramount and his *lusungulu* village, and it will be illustrated and examined further in Chapter III of Part III. As an Ngoni institution the big house was an integral factor in the succession to high office, and the *gogo* house played an essential role in ceremonial and ritual life. Houses were also one of the most important components in village grouping. Men, women and children regarded themselves as associated with a house in one of three ways. They were related to it by descent or by marriage; or they were members of the family of the *induna* who looked after its affairs; or they served the house as servants or labourers, and were possibly the descendants of captives caught in war and assigned to that house. Thus it often happened that the people living on the wings of the village had some relationship to the house on the side of the kraal where their huts were sited. There were many Ngoni villages where all the inhabitants were said to belong to one of the two or three or more houses, even though the majority of the inhabitants had no kinship or official relationship with a house.

614 The term 'clan' or 'clan descent group' has been used already many times and some explanation and definition is needed as a guide to its use in Part II before it is discussed further in Chapter II of Part III. The Ngoni considered that the clan of a person was of great importance for several reasons. The use of the clan descent name was the normal mode
576 of address between all adults. The Ngoni said they could not speak to any stranger until they knew his clan name, and they used it in all social intercourse, except when addressing the Paramount. Exogamy was strict
635 for people with the same clan name, and sexual relations between such individuals was regarded as incest.

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The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of the common people.
Shall we die on the earth?
The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of all beasts.
Shall we die on the earth?
Listen, you who are asleep, who are left tightly closed in the land!
Shall we all sink into the earth?
Listen, O earth! The sun is setting tightly.
We shall all enter into the earth.

CHAPTER II

THE PARAMOUNT

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Introduction

THE Cewa term for chief (*mfumu*) was widely used in Nyasaland for chiefs of all ranks, as well as for village headmen and, occasionally, as an honorific form of address to an important individual. Among the Cewa a man could 'become a chief' by acquiring, through marriage or purchase, the right to own a site, known as a *mzinda*, on which female initiation rites were carried out. This concept of the office of chieftainship among the Cewa and other local tribes was in sharp contrast to the centralized and unified concept inherent in the Ngoni term *inkosi*. I have translated *inkosi* here as Paramount because the term Paramount Chief was adopted by the Administration to denote a ruler who had recognized subordinate chiefs under him and whose court was an appeal court for their courts. It is necessary to emphasize here how distinctive the office of Paramount was among the various types of chiefs in Nyasaland, both in official recognition, and still more in the Ngoni ideas about their Paramount. We saw in Chapter II of Part I that no Nyasaland chiefs, except the Ngoni Paramounts, had Subordinate Native Authorities under them.

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When the Ngoni left the south, a number of small chiefdoms there were gradually being overcome by Shaka and, based on his armies, he had set up a new and unique type of *inkosi*. The leaders of military bands who left him—Mzilikazi, Soshangane, Zwangendaba and Ngwana—had little recognition before they left, except as military and clan leaders. Yet after the Ngoni left, Zwangendaba and Ngwana received from their followers recognition of their political leadership as *inkosi*, and this was expressed by giving to the Paramount the salute of *Bayete*. Throughout their recitals of traditions and in their accounts of their political system, Ngoni informants in both kingdoms emphasized that for each kingdom there was one *inkosi* to whom alone the *Bayete* was given. We assume, therefore, that the later Ngoni concept of the Paramount and his

function and authority was largely evolved and built up during the Ngoni migration across the Zambesi and the early settlement in Nyasaland.

The office of the Paramount was supported by three typical Ngoni institutions. The first was the regency exercised by the man who was held responsible for the care of the office of the Paramount. He was called 'the one who takes care of the country', 'the one who has to put the new *inkosi* in his place', 'the one who takes care of the young *inkosi* until he enters his father's place'. We shall see later how this principle of regency operated in particular cases in the succession to the Paramountcy. It proved to be an effective provision both in the case of a minor who was recognized as his father's heir, and during an interregnum while the succession was being discussed. The Ngoni showed a clear understanding of what functions the regent ought to perform, and when he exceeded these functions and usurped, or tried to usurp, the Paramount's position they condemned his action as wrong.

The second institution which supported the Paramountcy was the 'big house' from which the heir to the Paramount had to come. We shall see later that it was not always considered essential that the heir should be the actual child of the wife in the big house. A boy could be adopted into the house and, by Ngoni kinship rules, he was then a child of that house and of the woman in it.

The third institution, which made the Paramount immortal at death after having been supreme in his life-time, was the Ngoni practice of 'guarding his spirit' in a hut, usually in the village where he had lived. The guardianship of a spirit was not practised exclusively for the Paramount. All the chiefs and the heads of the Swazi clans had this provision made for their spirits when they died, but in national crises prayers addressed to the spirits of former Paramounts were of supreme importance.

The royal clan and the big house

Among the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans which formed the Ngoni aristocracy the royal clan had a unique position. Not only was it the clan of the Paramount, but its members had social rank and prestige because they belonged to his clan. In the northern kingdom informants showed awareness of the fact that their royal clan of Jere was not one of the well-known clans in the south. Other clan names found among them, such as Ngomezulu, Thole, Nzima, Nqumayo, and many more, were known to be clan names among the South-eastern Bantu. The following explanation was given by Cibambo about the name Jere and was the one most widely accepted:

¶ The Ngoni themselves say that the clan name of Jere was given during the journey, and that it arose out of the number of people who were with Zwangendaba. When the Ngoni want to speak of a large number of people they use two well-known words which are: '*Ngu Shaka*' (it is Shaka);

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not eat so much as other people. He must leave enough for others or he would be ashamed. He would take a few lumps of porridge from one wooden dish (*ingcwembe*) and then hand the other dishes to those around him. Each day one beast had to be killed from the house of each wife of the *inkosi* in turn. It was their food and they could not cease killing. The *inkosi* had his own great garden. After hoeing the *induna* of the *indlunkulu* called all the village people to come and plant these gardens first before their own. They did this because if a man was hungry, he went to the *inkosi* and said 'I am hungry' and he was given food to eat.

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In this account it is clear that the daily life of the Paramount had both private and public aspects. In private he was vulnerable to attacks from enemies. Hence he depended on the services of a trusted attendant to see that no sorcerers could make bad magic from his excreta; and he ate no food except that prepared by his own wives and mothers. On the other hand, in public he appeared as the generous and ceremonious ruler, providing food, beer and snuff for his visitors, and himself practising that restraint in eating which was characteristic of Ngoni good manners both from host and guest.

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In addition to the daily routine of sharing food with his immediate entourage and chance visitors, the Paramount had special feasts known as *izipheko*. These feasts, as described by Cibambo, were related to the bringing of tribute, thus emphasizing the reciprocal nature of the gifts passing between the people and the Paramount.

¶ Along with the tribute the *inkosi* had his feasts with which he wanted to feed his people. At an appointed time the *inkosi* and his wives and mothers prepared beer and three or four beasts for his men and women. Men ate their meat in the kraal but the women at the *indlunkulu*. All the people thanked him everywhere, including the women, and the men were thanking with dancing. Even although people were not called by the *inkosi*, yet many people came to his village to beg food from the *inkosi*. Also by telling the *izinduna* the *inkosi* would invite people to eat with him, and many would come from far away. The wives of the *inkosi* and his mothers were cooking soft or hard porridge, with different *imbido* (relishes) so that the *inkosi* could give them to his people. They would all be waiting in the kraal. A generous *inkosi* liked to stay in the kraal so that his food should be sent there in order to feed both notable people and poor people. He would be watching whom to give food to.

In this way although there was tribute (*imitulo*), it was not very burdensome. People did not complain to the *inkosi* about it. It was as if they were playing, because of the dancing. Those who had no wealth came to the *inkosi* and begged him to help them. The *inkosi* gave cattle to these people without asking them to pay again, because he said 'The people and the cattle, they are all mine. They are eating each other.'

There was an apparent contradiction here. On the one hand there was true reciprocity, that of the people who brought tribute or gifts and in

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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643 651 431 527 571 turn were invited to eat with the Paramount or summoned to special feasts. On the other hand there were people who seemed to have nothing, and who came in the hope of getting invited to eat food if they just sat in the kraal and looked hungry. Cibambo called them 'the notable people' and 'the poor people'. This contrast in behaviour ran right through Ngoni society and reflected the social standing of individuals who behaved in such different ways. There was a good deal of cadging for gifts and of gate-crashing at feasts on the part of people who had no intention, or no possibility, of making any adequate return. An Ngoni proverb illustrated the public attitude to reciprocal giving as distinct from begging: 'To say: Give, give, is to snatch. The child of a free man only gives.'

571 643 651 431 The bringing of tribute to the Paramount was only one aspect of the reciprocal relationships which ran right through Ngoni society, namely the bringing of gifts by a man in an inferior social position to his superior, with the expectation of receiving food or favour and of standing well with this superior. It was recognized that tribute was of two kinds, one of which was voluntary. If a *mulumuzana* or other notable wanted to please the Paramount he brought him presents—grain, flour, meat, beer. It was always emphasized that this was a free gift, with the added proviso that the giver wished to keep on good terms with the Paramount. Ngoni informants declared that the only compulsory form of tribute in pre-European days was that whenever a lion or a leopard was killed it had to be brought to the royal village through a succession of intermediaries, as described below.

These two principles of free giving and compulsory giving, and the attitudes engendered, are compared with the feeling about compulsory taxes under European rule in this text by Cibambo.

¶ Although people hate giving taxes to strangers in this land, yet tribute (*imitulo*) was given to their *inkosi* and to other chiefs. Such tribute was given in an indirect way, that is the *izinduna* did not mark out those who gave and who did not give tribute. The Ngoni did not wish that every male should give tribute as is done by Europeans today. They were just pleased if the village headman or *mulumuzana* had given something even though other people in his village did not give anything. Even the *alumuzana* themselves gave something at the time they thought it was convenient to themselves to give. There was no fixed time of the month or year. Much that was given as tribute was beer, meat, ivory, hoes and cloth, also cattle, sheep and goats after raids, and other loot from war.

[825] Power to 'eat' (*ukudla*) lion- and leopard-skins was given to certain people of the Swazi clans, but all the rest were obliged to bring them in. The lion- or leopard-skin had to be given first to the village headman. He went with it to the chief or *mulumuzana*. This one brought it to the *inkosi* along with his *amadoda* or *amajaha* of all his villages, the older men and [554] younger men. This was like going as warriors and they went with dancing (*ligubo*). The one who first stabbed the animal was pointed out, and the

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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second and third, and the finisher, at the place of dancing in the kraal. At such times each one when called rose and danced *umgiyo*, repeating his names. This was called *ukubiha izinhalipi*, reporting the heroes or the fierce ones. This is still being done today. The *inkosi* thanked the people who brought the skins by giving them a beast or a goat. When they were dressing the meat and eating it, they kept on dancing *ligubo* and crying the war-cry. At such times the women went along with the men to help them dance *ligubo*. They made the responses to the songs and jerked their necks.

All such things the *inkosi* divided among his houses. The big house had a big share, but especially his mother's house. She should have most. Even if his real mother was dead, the big share had to go there, to her house, where her successor lived.

Visits to the Paramount, whether for a particular occasion or as a matter of routine, were hedged about with ceremonial. It was expected that *alumusana* and other important people who lived near enough would visit the Paramount frequently and, according to some informants, they went every day in pre-European times.

No one could approach the Paramount except through one of the *izinduna* of the royal village, and the correct person to approach was the *induna* of the *indlunkulu*. Visitors were expected to wait at the gate of the kraal and put down their spears. When they were brought by the *induna* to the Paramount, they greeted him with '*Bayete*'. Then they sat down and the Paramount told the *induna* to greet them, and they replied '*Yebo, inkosi*'. This custom of indirect approach to the Paramount has been maintained. Early travellers in Nyasaland spoke of observing it, and when I was there it was considered outrageous manners on the part of any European if he penetrated immediately to the presence of the Paramount, without going through the accustomed channels.

The Paramount was both greeted and thanked for gifts of food, beer or snuff, with '*Bayete*'. If he moved from the kraal, all present said '*Bayete*'. If anyone had to leave his presence, he crouched low and murmured '*Bayete*' as he went out. Cibambo described this punctilious formality of thanking for gifts in the Ngoni manner.

¶ When receiving presents the Ngoni thanked the giver by taking them with two hands, even though it was a small present. Afterwards they thanked the giver by his *isibongo*, clan name, openly. They said that receiving a thing with one hand showed that you derided it and did not put any value on it. When receiving a present from bigger people or from a chief, some words of respect were added to the *isibongo*, such as '*Baba*', '*Nkosi yami*', '*E-Jere*'. Often the receiver if he was much pleased with the present added some *izitohozo* to the clan name, if he knew them. Those near him or some further away helped the receiver by thanking loudly after him. If what he received was food, he thanked at the beginning, and after eating the food he thanked again. If such a present of food was given to a body of people, the leader in the company first led the others in

CHAPTER III

HOUSES

361 171 823 WRITING of the social organization of the northern Nguni among the South-eastern Bantu, Mrs. Hoernlé[1] referred to three divisions of the typical village: the *indlunkulu* section where the principal hut was that of the mistress of the village; the *ikhohlo* section on the left-hand side of this hut, and the *inqadi* section on the right. The terminology used by the northern Nguni expressed right and left hand from the point of view of someone looking up from the gate of the kraal. I found that among the Ngoni they used right and left the other way as if the person were at the top of the kraal looking down at the gate, and I have adopted their usage.

171 361 554 Ngoni villages, which were royal villages or the head villages of Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans, also had a tripartite division into houses related to leading women, as we saw in the village plan in Chapter III of Part I, but there was a major difference between them and the northern Nguni grouping described by Mrs. Hoernlé. In Ngoni villages the *indlunkulu*, the hut at the head of the kraal, was occupied by the mother of the owner of the village, who had 'come out' with him from his father's village. In the right-hand section of the huts round the kraal was the hut of the owner's big wife, and on the left the hut of his next important wife. These three huts, representing three houses, were the focal points of the main divisions of the village. In fact in most villages the owner of the *indlunkulu* had the huts of other widows of her late husband beside her on each side, and the *cigodlo*, or section where the sons of the owner of the village lived, spread over a wide area behind the *indlunkulu* and behind the huts of the two chief wives. The plan used in Chapter III of Part I was necessarily simplified in order to bring out the main points. The grouping of huts in typical Ngoni villages showed varying degrees of elaboration, and it was not always easy at first to trace their connexions with the houses.

592 571 Houses in the Ngoni kingdoms could be considered as divisions of the village, though they did not always cover all the divisions. If we look at the membership of a house, as it was illustrated in a typical Ngoni village, it is clear that it had in it three elements connected by ties of kinship, affinity or association with the owner of the house, who was either a wife or a mother of the male owner of the village. The kinship group related to the *indlunkulu* comprised the male owner of the village, his mother and classificatory mothers with his brothers who had joined him. In the big house and in the second house of his wives the kinship

[1] op. cit. p. 83.

group consisted of himself and the mother and her children, including her daughters only until they married.

The affinal element in a house consisted of the other wives associated with the owner of the house as co-wives, and the wives of the sons of the owner. Both the kinship group and the affinal group were bound together by their rights in the cattle of the herd which was known as 'the cattle of the house of X'. From that herd were taken cattle for the *lobola* of the wives married after the house was founded, and for the wives of the sons and adopted sons of the house. Into that herd came the cattle received for the marriages of the daughters belonging to the house and the gift cattle sent to wives by their fathers after marriage. When the *lobola* had been fully paid up for a daughter of the house, then her relationship with it ceased and she was thenceforth known as belonging to her husband's mother's house.

Associated with the house in the villages of the Paramounts, the chiefs and the leading *alumuzana* were two other groups of people. One was the *induna* appointed 'to take care of the house' and his family. In the 1930's the *induna* was in charge of the cattle and of the many activities connected with the house, including the organization of male labour in hut-building, in kraal construction and in cultivation; he was consulted by the male members of the house about the selling of cattle and the use of the goods accumulated in the house. The other group associated with the house in pre-European days consisted of captives taken in war and allocated to the house who worked as labourers. The servants who worked for a house in the 1930's assisted with cooking, beer-making and minding the children, and they had huts near that of the owner of the house to which they belonged, placed on the right- or left-hand side of the kraal according to their affiliation with the big house or the second house. Informants said that in the past such association with a house included giving a beast from the herd of the house for the marriage of a servant. The *induna*, through the marriage of his daughters, built up his own herd, which he frequently kept at first with the cattle of the house in the main kraal, later building his own kraal.

A new house began when a man married his big wife. Although at first he built her a hut at the back of his mother's hut in his father's village, as soon as he moved out to his new village after his father's death, the big wife's hut had the next most important site in the kraal after that of the *indlunkulu*, and the second wife had the third place of importance. In some of the larger villages of the central kingdom, the custom of moving out into a new village after the death of the former owner had been given up, partly because of pressure on the land. The house grouping in relation to the siting of huts then became very complex, but the pattern was nevertheless discernible. The two sections under the big house and the *gogo* house, which had formerly divided into two villages, continued to exist together, and at Mcakhatha this dual

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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361 592 pattern covered two generations including the houses of the former chief and the reigning one.

The houses served several purposes in the organization of village life on the one hand, and on the other, provided an important instrument for regulating succession and inheritance, and for carrying out traditional ceremonies and ritual. It was the eldest son of the second house who would, if the *lusungulu* practice was followed, remain behind with the *gogo* village; and he was responsible for conducting traditional ritual and was expected to be able to carry out ceremonial procedure correctly. This was the main function of the *gogo* village and of the man who was head of the male members of the *gogo* house. The corresponding head of the male members of the big house was the owner of the village, and it was his eldest son by his first wife who would normally succeed him as chief or *muhumuzana*. The members of each house had a stake in the property of that house, particularly in the herd of cattle owned by it, and in any goods, such as cloth, bought by the sale of the cattle of the house. The house united the male members who belonged to it through this common ownership of cattle. In Chapter II of Part IV we shall examine further this aspect of belonging to a house.

554 592 562 In the organization of village life in villages belonging to chiefs or *alumuzana* the houses established the status of the wives of the owner of the village, and the status of those of his mothers who had come with him. His mother in the *indlunkulu* hut ranked first among her co-widows. The big wife came next, and the wife of the second house after her. Wives attached to the big house ranked above those attached to the second house.

● 571 592 627 562 The houses fulfilled their most prominent role in the day-to-day activities of the households associated with them. It was in these daily affairs and in planning for future events that the house organization provided the chief channels of authority. The exercise of this authority ranged from instruction in household tasks and emphasis on good standards of housekeeping to settling minor disputes arising from marital quarrels over property and over the custody of children. These minor cases could be settled out of court if the senior women showed that they knew how to listen to complaints and give advice which was accepted, with the result that good relations were restored. The main topics of discussion among the senior women on the verandah of the *indlunkulu* were the ingredients of these minor quarrels and disputes. If, by judicious handling, they could keep the cases out of court, they knew, and so did the village, that their authority was enhanced and their prestige more firmly established.

571 592 562 The authority of senior women was further reinforced through their organization of women's labour in household work and in cultivation. This authority in domestic affairs covered a woman's own household and the women and girls attached to it as household servants, the

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

households of her co-wives who were junior to her in the house, and the households of her sons' wives. These women also decided when to undertake certain work in cultivation or in harvesting crops, when to brew beer, when to re-polish the floors of huts and the sitting place in front of the huts, when to replenish the stock of cloth, ornaments and beads, baskets and mats, which were part of the wealth of the house. Other occasions for the exercise of authority were attending and superintending women's confinements and the private puberty rite of the girls, advising on matters of health, and supervising the training of children.

All these activities of the owners of the houses were so much part of the day-to-day life of a village that they could pass almost unnoticed unless a detailed analysis were made. The position and authority of owners of houses was, however, immediately evident on ceremonial occasions. These included the pre-marriage ceremony of *umzindo*, which was abandoned after the Europeans came; the series of visits and exchanges leading up to the marriage ceremony, *mtimba*; brewing beer on a number of occasions, for dancing *ngoma* and *ligubo*, for funerals and subsequent ritual shaving, or for entertaining important visitors whose coming was expected so that beer could be prepared in advance. On all such occasions, the courtyard surrounding the *indlunkulu* was a scene of great activity. Men put on their war-dance equipment there; the beer pots were assembled there; meat and blood for feasts were cooked there, while the less important maize porridge (*nsima*) was cooked in subordinate households. From the courtyard of the *indlunkulu* a procession of the *manina* (senior women) led by the owner of the house went out to greet visitors, to go to the beer drink, to take part in the dances, and to perform the ritual connected with births, deaths and marriages.

Marriage in Ngoni Society

Earlier in this chapter it was said that a new house derived from the marriage of a leading man to his big wife. Since marriage was so closely linked with the continuance and development of houses, and since a new wife when married separated from her own mother's house and became a member of her husband's mother's house, I have included a discussion of marriage in this chapter on houses.

There were three main principles in Ngoni marriage. It was a binding contract sealed by the exchange of cattle; it established succession in the male line; it formed a link between leading Swazi clans. When we examine in detail the organization of Ngoni marriage we see that its objectives were to build up a series of inter-clan and inter-family relationships. These began with inter-marriage between the leading Swazi clans, in order to strengthen the political and social relationships within that inner circle of Ngoni society. The political allegiance of leading individuals from clans of non-Swazi origin was strengthened by marriage

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584 period within which the handing over of cattle was completed varied according to the demands of the girl's father and the capacity of the man's father to find the required number. Informants agreed that when only a few beasts were demanded, the transfer took place before or immediately after the main ceremony. In addition to this formal transfer agreed on and carried out as part of the marriage contract, there was also an informal reciprocal transfer which had two main purposes. At the time of the main ceremony the bride's party brought with them a beast, called *mcando*, which was put into the herd of the bridegroom's mother's house to which the bride would henceforth belong. Later, when the two families ate together for the first time, one or more additional beasts were brought from the girl's former house and put into the herd of the house to which she now belonged. In this way, the new wife began to have cattle in the herd of her mother-in-law's house which were known as hers and which would be taken to form a new herd when she went out with her husband to his *lusungulu* village. As soon as these cattle were in the kraal of the house to which she now belonged, the new wife was able to eat *amasi* in her husband's village, which she had not been allowed to do since leaving her father's village.

571 585 In the series of feasts which marked the stages in the marriage relationship and which facilitated the coming together of the two families, the major part was played by the *indlunkulu* in each village. Many households in the girl's village shared in the preparation of food for the betrothal feast, but it was assembled when cooked and divided out by the woman owner of the *indlunkulu*, assisted by the men and women belonging to the girl's father's house. The next feast was in the man's village, and formed part of the main ceremony, before the bride's party returned to their home. The third feast was to celebrate the 'showing of the hearth-stones', when the young wife was allowed to cook in her husband's village for the first time. The food was collected in her parents' village and carried to her new village, where it was cooked by the women of the house into which she had married, and served in the courtyard of the *indlunkulu*. In the two final feasts—the *umncengo* which was a beer drink, and the *izinyongo*, a feast of beer and food—the beer was brewed and the food collected in the wife's village and cooked and [602] eaten in the courtyard of the *indlunkulu* in the husband's village. These two feasts finally broke down the barrier between the parents-in-law and were the first occasion on which they ate and drank beer together.

585 The main ceremony (*mtimba*) had three distinct parts.[1] The first part included the preparation of the girl in her own village (*ukuconga*); the entrance of her party into the man's village and the presenting of snuff

[1] I was present at an *mtimba* in Esondweni in the northern kingdom when the traditional ritual carried out in full was combined with a church wedding. The bridegroom was a man of the Dlamini clan from Swaziland, who had been adopted by Chief Mtwalo and had built a hut in the *cigodlo* of the big house.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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(*ukuqandisa*). The middle section, the main part of the ceremony, took place in the husband's village while the bridal party was there. In the last part the bride was left in her new home and three ceremonies marked her gradual integration into her new social group. 585

After the number of cattle had been decided upon in the final stage of the betrothal, the initiative was left to the girl's parents to announce the date of the *mtimba*. Eventually a message was sent through the *gogo* house of the girl's village to say that the bridal party would arrive on a certain day. Before the day came, the girl, now addressed as *umlobokazi* (the bride), was called to the *indlunkulu* in her village. There the leading women, her father's mothers, who had called in her father's sisters, gave her final instructions on how to behave in her new home. Ngoni women said that they were told at this time: 'Our child, we are putting you out of our family. We are handing you over to the other people. You were free and now your freedom is over for you are under other people. Where you are going you will meet with many troubles. They will say of you many things which you did not do. It is good to be patient.' During this instruction the girl cried and so did her mother. On the morning of the departure the girl was dressed in freshly prepared skins, her hair was arranged in the *isihlutu* (chignon) to which the gall bladder of a goat was pinned, and the gall bladder of a cow was tied to her elbow. Then, still sobbing and whimpering, and surrounded by her age mates and the female members of her house, she set out for her bridegroom's village, the young men of her village driving a bullock (*mcando*) as a present from the bride's parents to the mother of the bridegroom, in whose herd it was placed. [292 237] [152]

This part of the ceremony, the entry of the bride's party (*ukuqandisa*), was held to be of great importance, since it was the first time the bride's family and friends as a group had met the husband's family. The bride's procession waited by the kraal gate, singing *mtimba* songs, and every now and then a woman of the bride's party, one of her father's sisters, sang the praises of the bride's clan. As the young men driving the bullock entered the kraal, the bridal party joined them and they began to dance in the kraal. 571 585

Now the first overtures were made between the bride's party and the people of the bridegroom's village. The older women of the village approached the older women of the bride's party, greeting them and exchanging, in the Ngoni phrase, 'words which were good and proud and showed the quickness of their tongues'.

After these advances, the men of the village came into the kraal or gathered by the *indlunkulu*. While the bridal party began to sing with their heads bowed, the chief woman from the *indlunkulu* of the bride's village came forward, bending low, and on her knees presented to the *induna* of the *indlunkulu* of the husband's village a basket containing snuff boxes and beads. She made a speech, in which she said, 'Here is [516 431]

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

571 585 our child who is now leaving her home. She has no father now. She is leaving his care. We expect you to cherish her now as her father would.' In reply the *induna* assured them, 'Now she is here we will cherish her, but she must respect the owner of this house and be under her in all things.' Speeches about the absence of disease in either village were then made and the men took snuff. The bridal party and the villagers all remained seated and began to sing *umbedlo* songs (songs to be sung sitting).

585 At the marriage at Ezondweni, where I was present, the girls of the bridal party began to shiver as night fell, and a woman of the village [533] brought a sleeping mat as an invitation to go into the huts. Singing as they went, the women of the bridal party were shown a place to sleep, and the bride slept among them for that night. The bride's party went [797] off the next morning to the church at Elangeni for the church marriage service, while the bridegroom with a party from Ezondweni went by a separate route. In the days before the mission came, they used to spend the morning dancing in the kraal, while the husband's family killed a beast, or more than one, for the feast. During the day's dancing in the kraal, the leader of the village women took the husband's spear, came into the kraal with the village party and touched the bride gently on the shoulder. This was a sign that the bride was now one of the village [152] group, and the correct response was for her party to turn their backs and weep to show their grief because she had left them.

In Ezondweni, when the parties returned from church in the afternoon, a large crowd had assembled. The bridal party danced and sang in the kraal and outside the *indlunkulu* and now and then a leading woman of the bridegroom's village joined in. The bride and two supporting friends were given a mat to sit on, the husband and the *madoda* also sat down, the minister from the church prayed and they sang a hymn. Then the food, bowls of *usima* with large pieces of meat on top, was divided. The names of the divisions of Ezondweni were called out and the leaders of the divisions of that village and of other villages came to get the portions for their people.

Dancing continued after the feast until the bride's party took the bride to the husband's hut and left her there. The next morning the [533] bridal party returned home singing. Formerly the bride came to the door of the hut where she had slept with her husband, and called out the praise-names of her father. She then sang the *ummekezo* song (song of the deflowering) and the husband stood in the doorway behind her. Then he went into the kraal and sat facing the bridal party, who were singing. When the bride came in with a gourd of water there was silence while she poured water for him to wash his hands, mouth and eyes. This was the first public act of service for the husband after the consummation of the marriage and ended the main part of the ceremony, after which the bridal party went home.

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her daughters had died, and the herd of cattle was either inherited by the senior daughter's eldest son or divided among the sons of different daughters. Cewa informants said that quarrels constantly arose over the ownership of cattle, and two modern developments—the spread of *utengwa*[1] marriage and of a patrilineal form of *mbumba* with its repercussions on cattle acquisition and disposal—caused further tensions in Cewa society.

The role which cattle played in Ngoni social life partly depended on the structure and inter-relationships of the Ngoni social groups. The house and the family within the larger village unit were so organized that group ownership and group disposal of cattle caused no permanent friction. There were arguments about the disposal of cattle, but they were temporary and relatively trivial. The strength of tradition in the concept of ownership, and in the values and attitudes inherent in cattle-owning and keeping, was firmly established and was related to modern needs by the ingenuity of the Ngoni in manipulating traditional practices to suit new situations. Cattle therefore strengthened the integration of existing social units, and helped to preserve that unity and cohesion in Ngoni society which the ancestors were said to commend and to wish for. On this plane of conformity to a required pattern, cattle influenced the living and their behaviour. They also, through the structure and function of the houses, belonged to the spirit who was guarded in a particular house. As we shall see in Chapter IV, the ritual formula of address to the ancestor at the sacrifice of a beast was always 'Here is your beast . . . Here is your meat.' The living and the dead were joined therefore in the common ownership of a herd or part of a herd. The actual practices in social and ritual life where cattle were concerned, and the ideas and concepts from which the practices arose, will take up most of this chapter and form the necessary prelude to the further analysis of the ancestor cult.

Ownership of cattle and care of herds

'The war of the cattle-tax' was the name given in the central kingdom to the installation of dipping tanks in the 1930's and the levying of a tax of a shilling per head of cattle on all cattle-owners. The attempt by the Government to focus responsibility for dipping and to collect the taxes due brought out clearly the difficulties of applying English conceptions of ownership to the Ngoni. In the English meaning of the word ownership, a man can claim as his possession cattle which he has bought or inherited, and their offspring. This individual ownership means that he alone has the right to sell the animals or their milk, to regard the profits from such sale as his, and at any time to kill an animal for meat. He can will them to his descendants or to anyone he chooses after his

[1] Marriages in which the man took his wife to live in his village, but did not give *lobola* for her.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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of this book, especially Chapters IV and V will show how the organization of Ngoni society and the cultural way of living in it, necessarily surrounded the life of children and the training given to them with a much wider horizon. We shall talk about the family, the household, the village as the setting of Ngoni child life, but these terms have to be interpreted according to the Ngoni social organization, sketched very briefly in Chapter I and set out at length in my earlier book *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*. Looked at from another angle, we can see that a young child's horizon in Ngoni villages was limited at first to what he saw around him and the people who had daily or frequent contact with him and who understood and supplied his daily needs. But that circle of people forming a young child's contacts was from the beginning much wider than the individual family which a child was born into. When he began to run about and to pass beyond the restricted confines of the household, it was as we shall see, the duty and responsibility of all Ngoni adults to notice his behaviour and correct him when necessary.

The relationships inside the large Ngoni families, between one family and another in a Ngoni village, with related families in other villages, with all members of the same clan living in an area—these were threads in the web of kinship and clanship which united the Ngoni people. These threads were also inseparable from the political links between the people and their territorial chief, and between the whole people and the Paramount, the head of the kingdom. The difference, however, between the Ngoni kingdom under the Paramount which included all his subjects of Ngoni and non-Ngoni ethnic groups, and the Ngoni aristocracy in the villages was a profound difference. It was the latter who understood, appreciated and sought to hand on to their children Ngoni ways of living based on Ngoni values. Hence in most villages there were sharp distinctions between standards of behaviour within Ngoni families and in non-Ngoni families.

854 house was still killed and eaten. The cloth came out of the
[432] store of cloth bought when cattle were sold, and kept in the hut of the senior woman of the father's house.

Visit to the mother's home

593 If, as was always the case in earlier days, the mother of the
574 new baby had come from a distant village, she did not see her own mother or her relatives, and they did not see the child until it was several weeks old, and considered by the senior women strong enough to undertake a journey. Then a visit involving much ceremony took place, for the wife's
[606] mother-in-law headed the party. The stiff and formal relations between the two sets of 'in-laws' had been eased slightly through the series of feasts and exchanges which preceded and followed the marriage ceremony. Face-to-face
[571] intercourse was, however, still very formal between the two families, and this first visit with the grandchild was in one sense an act of condescension on the part of the husband's family, since the child belonged to them. It was also a human and natural recognition of the eagerness of the young mother to see her own mother and display her child. Word was sent in advance by a messenger from the husband's village to announce the visit, so that the wife's family could make due preparation.

The main object of this visit was, in the Ngoni phrase, 'to show the child at its mother's home'. The young mother and
[606] baby, with her mother-in-law in the place of honour, sat outside the big house of the girl's father's family. Her father
[431] and his male relatives came to salute the child and to give it
[603] presents of beads, and in modern times small gifts of money as well. If the girl's father owned many cattle, he killed a beast, and they feasted that night, and the visitors carried home meat with them as well as the presents to the child. It was all very formal and correct, except when the young mother escaped for a short time to the circle of her sisters and girlhood friends, and exchanged confidences with them.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

572 than dissolved. The element of secrecy in the confidence exchanged gave the girls a much-needed sense of privacy, and the freedom of being able to say anything to the friend was a relief from the constant guard on speech and manners.

535 The girls had dance-groups, and practised dancing in or near a compound. Each group had an 'owner' who called
● 571 the others together and organized the dancing. These were several dance-groups, in contrast with the boys' single group,
[578] and the girls' groups were often rent by internal quarrels, leading to splits in the groups.

865 The dance-groups, and other little knots of girls, often had violent quarrels in which all their latent aggression came to the surface. They shouted at each other, scratched each other's faces and burst into tears of anger and frustration. If senior Ngoni women were around when these scenes took place, they generally broke in and rebuked the 'owner' of the group and sent them all home. Sometimes they deliberately turned their backs, leaving the girls to fight it out among themselves, or hoping the 'owner' would restore order. The senior women, rather unobtrusively as a rule, kept an eye on the girls in their dance-groups and at other times, and were adept at summing up their characters and looking out for signs of leadership and of ability to control others.

157 One type of leadership was often shown when a girl collect-
538 ed younger children together, for singing, games or for tell-
555 ing stories in a recitative form with a refrain in which the others joined. There was a certain kind of skill in reciting these stories, recognized alike by the children listening and by adults watching from a distance. The Ngoni believed that this skill was due to a gift for eloquence, not so far removed from the eloquence of the man who chanted the praises of the chiefs, or the man who composed his own songs. This eloquence was said to come 'from the chest'. Ngoni men and women passing a group of children spellbound at the recital of a story would say: 'Ha! look at that one. She has that which is of the chest—real eloquence.'

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

463 foreman in charge of gangs of workers. All this last group
177 involved the earning, spending and sharing of money in-
[434] comes, but even more important in Ngoni eyes, they offered
[571] opportunities of exercising authority, and of controlling and directing others.

624 In local government and in the courts, which formed an
693 integral part of it, the qualities demanded were wisdom, ability to make decisions, expert knowledge of the law, skill in conducting cases and in summing up evidence, and knowledge of the people, so that their reactions to new measures and to difficult court decisions could be forecast. Certain
[827] women were thought of as inheriting this kind of judicial
[562] ability and were often turned to in private by their husbands, sons or brothers and asked to declare themselves in support of or against an important decision and to discuss its merits or demerits.

622 In choosing a successor to a chief the regents who were responsible for the selection looked for particular qualities of individual character as well as for evidence of the ideal Ngoni personality traits. Men who by right of inheritance could have succeeded their father were sometimes passed over because they showed characteristics which would make them a bad chief. This was one of the reasons why sons of leading men were watched so closely and corrected so sharply by the elders of a village who were noting their adjustment to the basic personality pattern as well as their individual character.

There were certain acknowledged ritual activities which demanded of the performer both a high degree of conformity to Ngoni personality patterns and special individual characteristics. On the death of a chief one of his sons or brothers was designated to become head of the 'elder' village which remained behind, when the new chief with some of the members of his father's 'house' moved out to found a new village. The 'one who stayed behind' as he was called was expected to be the epitome of all Ngoni qualities, and to have a good memory for, and an understanding of, Ngoni tradi-

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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[P.1]

CHAPTER I

MARRIAGE IN THE TIME OF PEACE

1. *The old social structure*

IN THE DAYS before the European conquest, the Ngoni people lived in large villages each containing hundreds of huts built round a central cattle byre. Each married woman had her own hut and there were separate dormitories for boys and for girls. The huts were grouped into small clusters, each containing the dwellings of a few close agnates with their wives and children under the leadership of the senior male agnate. If the leader of the cluster was an important person, captives taken in war were allocated to him and their huts were included in his own cluster. Clusters were grouped into divisions, each usually under the control of a village lieutenant. Within the same division the heads of clusters were either agnates of the lieutenant or were people who had been captured by him or his father or who had been allocated to him by the chief and who were therefore bound to him as quasi-kinsmen. Several divisions made up a village under a headman or a regional governor. The village lieutenants were dependents or former captives of the headman or his ancestors, and were allocated to their divisions by him. Some divisions were under the control of junior kinsmen of the headman. Each village was attached to a royal headquarters where there was a senior queen. This arrangement of clusters, divisions, villages, and royal headquarters, which I refer to as the residential system, seems to have been similar to that found to-day among the Swazi.[1]

The system was a growing one. Brothers brought up in the same cluster gradually achieved their independence and split off to establish clusters of their own. The heads of clusters grew in importance and were promoted to village lieutenants so that their clusters became divisions, while divisions grew too large to be contained within the villages and moved off to establish themselves as separate villages. This process of expansion did not in itself affect the formal hierarchy of authority. The lieutenant who established his own village as a distinct spatial entity still remained a lieutenant of his lord, and deferred to him in matters of importance. The same word[2] was used to refer to a division of a royal headquarters, a division of a village, and a cluster within a division. The relationships of superordination and subordination between persons remained the same despite changes in spatial separation.

[1] Cf. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 66.

[2] *Cigawa*, pl. *vigawa*, from *ku-gawa*, to divide.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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Succession to office within this system was from a man to his eldest son by his great wife. A man inherited from his father not only his father's dependents but also his father's political superiors. The segments of the system, although some of them had special names, could all be referred to by the name of the person in charge of each segment. The heir succeeded to the name of his father and to responsibility for the segment named after his father. New people came into the system in two ways: by birth and by capture. Captives were placed in the system by decree of the Paramount Chief and his regional governors. The function of marriage was, in this context, to locate children in the system unambiguously and uniquely.

Two systems of relationships set up ties which cut across the lines of the residential system. These were the military regimental system of age-sets and the bilateral kinship system. In this paper we shall be concerned only incidentally with the regimental system, in so far as it directly affected marriage. We are, however, concerned with the kinship system, and in particular with the relationship of husband and wife. By careful choice of wives for himself and his sons a man ensured that his own group of agnates was linked to many other agnatic groups by bonds of affinity and, in the next generation, of matrilateral kinship.

It is from this point of view that we can best approach the analysis of marriage as it was in 'the time of peace'. Marriage arrangements then worked in conjunction with the residential system which is now in decay and it is not surprising that the replacement of the old system by a new one has been accompanied by changes in the kinds of marriage entered into by Ngoni men and women.

2. *Fidelity and fertility*

The old Ngoni residential system had much in common with the Zulu and Swazi systems and there was much in common in the realm of marriage. Marriage involved a permanent transfer of the fertility of the woman to the man's group. The children of a man's wife fell entirely within his own segment of the system, so that political ties became coincident with lineage ties. But while marriage secured for a man legitimate descendents with whom to people his own segment, it also established ties of affection and obligation which cut across the cleavage lines of the residential system. A man and his affines were linked in a specific relationship, entailing definite rights in division in the marriage, validated by the transfer of cattle and made permanent by the birth of children. The rites of marriage affirmed the transfer of the woman's fertility, the agnatic affiliation of her children, and the rights and obligations of affines towards one another. This pattern is common to many peoples organized patrilineally. Nevertheless, some of the characteristics of highly developed agnatic systems, such as ghost marriage, the marriage of wives by a woman, and the marriage of a queen with cattle contributed by the whole nation, were not found among the Ngoni.

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segment of the residential system was recognized and institutionalized. Furthermore, it is in line with this thesis that, in arranging the marriage of recent captives, no great attention was paid to the establishment of farflung affinal links. Frequently a man and a woman who had been allocated to the same captor, and whom they both addressed as 'father', married one another on his instructions. Payments made in these marriages were small or non-existent. Recent captives were too low in the hierarchical structure to be concerned about reinforcing their position by horizontal ties. Their ambitions were directed to securing promotion by becoming lieutenants of their captors.

5. Autonomy of marriage

The pattern of segmentation of the residential system was continually changing. In part this was due to proliferation downwards, that is, by the process of increasing segmentation between brothers and between fathers' sons. In addition to this process political promotion and death in war altered the relative position of the segments associated with particular people. Marriage itself was a social process which, in so far as the relationship between man and wife was concerned, did not react directly on the residential system. This system was based on patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence and the movements of women, except at the level of the queens, were from one point of view irrelevant to the system. It was the grouping of children round their mother, in contrast to their father's children by other wives, which related the marriages of one generation to the patterns of segmentation of the next. A woman with no children in her house, whether her status was high or low, was structurally irrelevant to the residential system.

Marriage was also largely independent of the central government. Warfare, not domesticity, was the right and proper occupation of young men, and the age at which men married for the first time was probably about thirty. Informants all stressed that in the old days first marriage took place at later ages for both men and women than it does now. Wiese implies that girls were married any time after puberty,[20] but my informants stated that girls did not usually marry until they were aged about twenty to twenty-five. Men and women were organized into parallel age-sets, usually referred to as regiments, and corresponding regiments used to dance and frolic together. Sometimes a man took a wife from the regiment corresponding to his own, but there does not seem to have been any positive obligation to do so. Particular regiments were not prevented from marrying, as among the Zulu, and all the tales of the Paramount Chief intervening in the affairs of warriors are phrased in terms of the chief instructing a laggard to find himself a wife when all his age mates had already married. The chief did however interfere

[20] Wiese, op. cit. 'Expediçao . . .', p. 473, and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 191.

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855 593 The recent captives sent their children to one of the senior wives of their captor. Husband, wife, and unweaned child slept together in the same hut, but their waking lives were spent in association with other and different groups of people.

631 554 591 In view of what has happened in modern times, we must draw attention to two features of the residential system which were not, at that time, directly related to the processes of marriage. A man lived where he belonged politically, and the residential system was an integral part of the political organization of the state. A man's place in it was determined by birth, and could not be altered except by the intervention of his political superiors. He could not change his political affiliation merely by going to live in another village or division or cluster, while if he received political promotion, or if his segment was punished by the State, the change of status was sometimes accompanied by change of residence. Secondly, choice within the system was expressed by hiving-off, not by moving about. The variable factor within any segment was the extent to which the potential cleavages within it were made actual cleavages. A man decided whether he would continue to live in the same cluster or division as his elder brother and depend on the common herd, or whether he would establish his own cluster with its own herd and own spatial identity. He did not have to decide whether he would continue to attach himself to one lieutenant or royal headquarters or whether he would transfer his allegiance to another. In this he had no choice. Choice lay in the extent of segmentation, not in the location of allegiance. We shall see that changes in these features [178] in the residential system have in recent times been related to changes in marriage.

581 613 Marriage in 'the time of peace' was essentially a means by which agnatic segments, unable by the fact of exogamy to produce their own children, were provided with child-bearers from outside the segment. A woman was associated as a child-bearer with a definite point in her husband's agnatic segment, and this association was permanent. The biological determinants of child-rearing strengthened the permanence of the association. To bear a child for her husband's agnatic segment, in any system of this general type, a woman must be associated with it for three years or more, from conception to weaning; and as one child is weaned, the next is on the way. One man can beget children for his agnatic line by many wives at the same time, but a woman can produce for only one husband at a time. Thus while it is possible to maintain stable exogamous matrilineal groupings without fixing permanently the [582] reproductive powers of men, agnatic exogamous groupings, if they are to persist in time, must be supplied with permanent sources of fertility from outside. The old Ngoni marriage system did this. [178] We shall see that nowadays both the permanent transfer of fertility and the persisting agnatic groupings have disappeared.

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[P.17]

CHAPTER II

PROCESSES OF CHANGE

1. White conquest

THE SOCIAL system which we have so far described flourished in an environment in which the Ngoni people were separated from other tribes by a no-man's-land. Ngoni raiding parties crossed this tract and returned with captives, food and some cattle. The only other contacts with the outside world were with Arab slave-traders and their agents who exchanged slaves and ivory for cloth and guns, and with a few white and half-caste traders and explorers. In 1898 the Ngoni army was defeated by a force under British leadership and many villages were burnt down. Very many of the cattle were looted and the people dispersed. A White township was built in the middle of the Ngoni kingdom, the warriors were disarmed, and an administrative system was established involving both Whites and Ngoni. Missionaries arrived, schools were opened, labour recruiters and later tobacco planters began their activities.

We are not concerned here with the total effect of this sequence of events but only with the results it has had on marriage. We can distinguish a number of fields in which processes initially external to the indigenous society began to impinge on it and to become part of it. The establishment of White control brought to an end the Ngoni wars. The building up of the Cewa chieftainships contiguous to Ngoni country affected the whole scheme of values held by Ngoni people at the same time as those values were being altered by the intrusion of White technology, political offices, legal concepts, and religions. The physical dispersion of the people in the face of the British troops was followed by a greater dispersion of men, and later of women and children as well, over the mining centres of Southern Rhodesia and the Copperbelt.

The large villages which formed the core of the residential system were burnt, and their inhabitants never all came together again. At first people lived in small settlements of three or four grass shacks built in the hills or in the bush. Gradually the people gathered together in distinct villages, but their population was different in structure from that of the former villages. The groupings of people which stayed together after 1898 represented the smallest fragments of the residential system, and these small fragments collected together into larger associations which were related to, but by no means coincident with, the larger segments of the old system. Some segments left the area and rejoined the tribes from whence they

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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came. Others followed maternal links or were attracted to the district messengers, the newly-created political agents of the White Administration. About 1912 the Administration adopted a policy of decreasing the number of distinct villages and effected amalgamations between villages which had nothing at all in common except spatial proximity. Later still, from about 1920 onwards, new immigrants began to enter the area from the surrounding Cewa tribe in the face of alienation of land to Whites.

These villages became the basic local administrative units. Men were identified in terms of their tribe, their chief, and their village. To this extent the new village inherited the political functions of the old. But men, instead of being fixed in their allegiance, moved from village to village seeking good land for their gardens and freedom from quarrels. The proliferation of villages was to some extent controlled by the Administration, so that if a man quarrelled with his elder brother he could no longer easily set up a village of his own. Instead he sought refuge with his maternal or affinal kin, registered himself in their village, and became for some purposes at least subordinate to the headman of that village. A man's political position was determined by where he had decided to live, whereas under the old system he had had to live where he belonged politically. The whole nature of affinal and maternal ties shifted so that in some instances they became more important than the ties of paternal kinship.

2. Rival tribes

The values of Ngoni life were in the old days held in conscious opposition to those of the tribes with whom they fought. All the later captives came from matrilineal uxorilocal tribes, who made only token transfers at marriage, and who married at an earlier age than did the military Ngoni. They did not take so severe a view of adultery, and for girls copulation at puberty was obligatory. Captives who had been brought up in this tradition were in the old days forcibly required to adopt the Ngoni way of life, and indeed it seems likely that to some extent they did so willingly as part of the process by which they transferred themselves in allegiance from one group to the other. After 1898 the central government of the Ngoni lost much of its power and it was no longer able to enforce conformity to Ngoni standards. Ngoni marriage payments had been made in cattle, and the looting of cattle made it more difficult to maintain these payments. The example provided by the adjacent Cewa chiefdoms reinforced the tendency to depart from the modes of behaviour of the past. Furthermore, groups of Cewa entered Ngoni country after 1898, as we have already noted, and these people had never been indoctrinated with Ngoni beliefs and values. In addition, many individuals followed their captured relatives and joined them where they were living in Ngoni country. To-day some villages, although under Ngoni chiefs, have matrilineal succession, dance

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courts themselves have been influenced by the introduction of Christian rites, and in matters of divorce have been subject to pressure from the missions.

4. The punishment of adultery

The Administration prevented Ngoni from killing adulterers. Instead they changed adultery into a private delict, without specifying what damages could be awarded. Indeed the whole position of indigenous tribunals was equivocal until 1929, when the Native Courts Ordinance was passed. Until then no specific courts were recognized other than those presided over by White officers of the Administration. At the same time the Administration expected chiefs and others to maintain law and order and formally listed their duties in these terms. The chiefs had therefore to extemporize and administer traditional law as best they could. Since 1929 Native Courts have been recognized and the Administration has in the main supported the decisions reached in these courts. The law as administered now is certainly not the same as it was before 1898 and the differences are not merely the substitution of 'civilized' penalties for those 'repugnant to natural justice and morality'. Nor is the law identical with English or Roman-Dutch law. The law of adultery and divorce is adapted to a situation in which bridewealth is rarely paid, wives are left deserted for years by their husbands, and the custody of children is uncertain and dependent on the agreement of the children themselves.

5. Labour migration

Labour migration began in 1898 and since then there has been a continual flow of men and women seeking work in the mining towns of Southern Rhodesia and on the railway line of Northern Rhodesia. The constant absence of men away at work leaving their wives behind has made for a preponderance of women over men in the rural area and has led to more adultery and to the emergence of pleas for divorce on ground of desertion. The increasing number of wives who accompany or follow their husbands had enlarged the social field within which the marriage relationship operates so that a quarrel between a man and his wife in town may be referred for resolution to kinsmen many hundreds of miles away in the village. Men marry fresh wives in the towns and bring them home years later with many children. Two people living in villages may trace their relationship to each other through some half-forgotten migrant in the towns.

In 'the time of peace' marriage was a process by which an established social structure was maintained and developed. That structure has gone and Ngoni now live in a world of larger scale and greater social mobility. Marriage has become something by which local stability of relationship is maintained despite the fluidity of society as a whole. A man moves from village to village, from

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one mining town to the next, sleeps for a night with a prostitute and lives for years with a concubine. What is at least relatively permanent is his relationship to his wife and to his children by her. Men still hope that they will be able to gather their children about them as they grow old, and build up new villages so that their names will be remembered. Status is still measured in terms of dependants, and the most certain of all dependants are legitimate children. Ngoni marriage no longer automatically ensures that a man will have custody of his children, but without marriage he has no hope at all of retaining them.

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parents have different fields of interest, but the two fields overlap in the well-being of the married couple. At first there is much formality between them, and intermediaries are used whenever possible. Later they become more friendly. In the setting of the village meeting some parents appear to see themselves as allied in wisdom with the opposite parents against the foolishness of the younger generation whose immature behaviour has been the cause of the meeting. At other times, they may act to defend the rights and happiness of their child against the claims of the rival kin group. We have seen in the story of Daniel and Deborah [21] how yet another alignment can occur when both sets of parents support one spouse against the other. There is no simple way in which these different alignments can be predicted, for they are in fact the outcome of the continually changing pattern of social relationships within the local community. In general, all people wish to preserve the existing configuration of relationships, to support the interests of their children and to maintain the values of their society. In any particular situation, these goals may be mutually incompatible, and there is no over-riding principle, such as agnatic descent or a state-enforced code of law, to which all decisions can be referred. The tenuousness of the cohesion of the local group of kin is reflected in the varying alignments of parents in marital quarrels.

We tend to think of quarrels as socially disruptive, and in so far as they are not resolved they do lead to the break-up of existing groupings and the formation of new ones. Yet from another point of view, quarrelling is as much a cohesive process as is common participation in marriage ceremonial. Indeed, just as we have seen already [22] that a ceremony of marriage may be a vehicle for expressing hostility between kin groups as well as recognition of common interest, so a quarrel may lead to increased solidarity between kin groups as well as express hostility between spouses. By taking steps to resolve a quarrel, one kin group is brought into face-to-face contact with the other; there is visiting between their villages and mutual hospitality in somewhat the same way as in marriage ceremonial. The two groups may join to censure the erring spouse. The censured person may feel deserted by his (or her) parents but his father and his father-in-law may have come closer together.

The formality that characterizes relations between parents at the beginning of a marriage gradually disappears. A man or woman can always seek shelter and hospitality at the hut of a *child's parent-in-law* and in the final ceremony of marriage, when the married couple enter the wife's mother's hut, the two pairs of parents sit together and discuss the merits and limitations of their respective offspring. It is regarded as incestuous for a man to marry a woman whom he calls *child's parent-in-law*. By so doing his son's wife

[21] See above, p. 82.
[22] See above, pp. 76f.

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602 the parents of the couple. If the parents are not available other kinsfolk can substitute for them, but in general it is a man's or woman's father who represents the interests of their local group of kin in situations in which these interests are contrasted with those of the spouse's kin. It is the woman's father who receives all the different payments made in marriage, and he is free to keep the payments or to distribute them among his relatives as he thinks fit. If a woman's father is dead or away at work the payments are made to her brother or her father's brother or her mother or some other relative who, in this situation, is prepared to assume the responsibilities that would otherwise be borne by him. Similarly, most men find the money for marriage payments themselves, but if a man is too poor to do this, it is first to his father that he turns for assistance. If, however, his father is dead or poverty-stricken or unwilling to provide the money, he can ask some other relative for help. Here we are dealing with situations in which the father or his substitute
• [591] is acting as the representative of the loosely structured local group of kin in situations in which his own children are specifically involved. There are, however, certain specific kinship relations which we can separate out from the general operation of local kinship and which impinge on the marriage relationship. A grandmother has a particular interest in the sexual aspect of marriage. The eldest brother acts as intermediary between a man and his father in the marriage negotiations. Younger brothers are interested in the disposal of widows. Children have rights in the property of a married couple. These are more specific obligations and rights, and while it is possible to find substitutes if the genealogically correct relatives are not there, there is more rigidity in these matters than in those in which the initiative lies with the local group of kinsfolk whoever they may be.

603 We have mentioned that the grandmother who rears a girl may be in charge of her seclusion at puberty (p. 32). Even when some other old woman is in charge, the girl's grandmother has some responsibility for her sexual behaviour. If a man does not sleep with his wife she complains to his grandmother, and although a man is not instructed in sexual matters by his grandmother, he can discuss them more freely with her than with any other kinswoman. Grandmothers sometimes play an important part in the resolution of a marital quarrel in the village, and they often act as midwives. It is a man's grandmother who complains to him if his wife is not bearing children, and it is to her that he may turn for advice about medicines. In the courts, however, grandmothers do not play so important a role. They are women, and important women use their
[592] influence more in village situations than in court, where men are in control and male councillors look to a man's brothers and father for confirmation of evidence.

593 There is considerable formality in the relationship between a man and his own parents and this formality appears to be greater if

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teach that the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of marriage payments is no concern of the Church, while the D.R.C.M. have a rule that bridewealth shall not be paid although this rule does not seem to be enforced. In general, in the village and in the court, the obligations of Christians are thought of as supplementary to their obligations as ordinary men and women, and Christian ceremonies to some extent supplement, but do not replace, traditional ceremonies. Thus there may be a church wedding in addition to a gall bladder ceremony, and a divorce in the eyes of the mission following after a divorce in court. Pressure has sometimes been put on chiefs and court members to act in accordance with the teaching of the mission, as in a past attempt on the part of the Catholic White Fathers to prevent courts from granting divorces to Catholics.[29] This type of intervention has applied particularly to courts where the chief was himself a Catholic. The Administration has opposed this pressure, and does not itself recognize any legal significance in religious ceremonies.

14. Spouses and kinsfolk

We may see the married couple in the middle of a system of relationships which connects them with persons and institutions each interested in their behaviour and in the maintenance of the marriage tie. By living peacefully together, by producing children, and by fulfilling their obligations to their kinsfolk and affines, they can, with discretion, satisfy the divergent claims implicit in this system of relationships. If they begin to quarrel, their kinsmen and neighbours attempt in the first instance to reconcile them. Only when this is impossible do those interested in the marriage begin to split up into groups with differing interests whose rival claims must be weighed by the court. Even then it is hoped that reconciliation will be possible, that a wife will return to her husband after she has paid him damages for adultery, and a husband return to his wife after many years of neglect. Whereas in the old days marriage was related to a fairly definite residential system, and rights and obligations were clear cut, nowadays the forces holding together a body of kinsfolk are weaker, and the danger of disruption of the group because of quarrelling is greater. The genealogical composition of the group is more variable and alters from year to year. Marriage, as one of the mechanisms by which local groups are built up, is part of the general political process, and is affected by inter-group and inter-personal relations that at first sight appear to have little to do with marriage. We observed that tribal and religious affiliation are significant criteria in a possible spouse. The divergent interests of less permanent groups, such as cliques and factions, influence choice of marriage partner and behaviour within marriage, as we have seen in the stories of Absolom and Mary (p. 60) and Amos and Eve (p. 28). Conversely, marital interests affect non-

[29] *Cf.* Richards, op. cit. pp. 83-4, for similar events among the Bemba.

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marital behaviour, as for example when a new-acquired wife persuaded her husband to seek work with her in Southern Rhodesia so that she might enjoy his prosperity to the exclusion of her senior co-wives who were left in the village.

Within the kinship system itself, ties of affinity compete with and are affected by ties of consanguinity. A quarrel between a married couple may lead to further quarrelling between affinally-linked relatives, and a dispute between a man and his wife's relatives may lead to a quarrel with his wife. Yet on the other hand a man who merely finds a woman and marries her without reference to her relatives is uncertain of his rights in the marriage and cannot appeal to her relatives if she misbehaves. There can be no ceremonies of marriage, and he must resort to subterfuge to get a marriage certificate. If he sends his children to his wife's parents to be cared for, they will accept them, but by so doing they do not accept him as a son-in-law. His wife's parents will deny that they know his name and if he takes his wife to court, they will mock him by saying 'We do not know this man'. Irrespective of marriage payments, a man cannot be validly and effectively married in the rural area without establishing his relationship to his affines. For a woman this is not always so, for her husband may have come from afar to work in the area, or he may earlier have broken away from his kinsmen. But without the support of his own kinsmen a man is dependent on his wife's kin for assistance in the marriage and, though the marriage may last, he is still one man living alone in a strange village.

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CHAPTER V

SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

1. Old and new marriage

WE HAVE described marriage at two periods in Ngoni history, as it was in the 1890's and as it is now. The differences we have found between the two periods are not due to chance except in the sense in which we may speak of all historical incidents as being partly due to chance and partly determined by the limiting conditions imposed by the past. Changes in the field of Ngoni marriage have been paralleled by changes in other aspects of Ngoni social life, have been influenced by other changes and have in turn influenced them. Throughout Ngoni history men and women have always married, but the society in which they married has changed. Marriage in the time of peace was appropriate, more or less, to the general ordering of social life in those days, and modern marriage is appropriate, again more or less, to the social structure of today.

Our task is then a threefold one. We have to show the relationship between old marriage and the rest of the old society, a similar relationship between modern marriage and modern society, and the process by which the transition from one set of conditions to the other has come about. We have outlined in Chapter II some of the internal and external factors responsible for this transition, and the nature of the material available to us on the 1890 period has led us, in Chapter I, to describe the old system largely in analytic terms. In this chapter we shall attempt to clarify our picture of the past in the light of an analysis of modern marriage.

In the old days the residential system provided the framework for political and lineage ties. Marriage was a legitimate means whereby children were recruited into segments of the system. Marriage involved a permanent transfer of fertility from the woman's kin to her husband's kin. Adultery was punishable by death, and divorce was rare. Affinal ties cut across the cleavage lines of the residential system, but while these ties were important, a man could not transfer his allegiance to his wife's or to his mother's group. A man who quarrelled with his kinsmen could not move to another village to live, but could only hive off to form a dependent but recognizable cluster of his own, which still remained part of the same residential segment.

The material apparatus belonging to the system, that is, the great villages with hundreds of huts and central cattle byres, was to a large extent destroyed in 1898 by the British. A few important people in the system were killed, and many of the cattle looted. With the establishment of British rule, it was physically possible for the

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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have been discussing it. Divorce took place because the man, a recently captured Kunda, ran away back to his former tribe leaving his wife, daughter of one of Mpezeni's lieutenants, behind in her father's village. In 'the time of peace' marriages were stable, with or without payment. The wealthy men were the politically important men, and indeed Wiese's assertion that men married off their daughters so as to gain the maximum number of cattle [8] may be based on the behaviour of socially ambitious fathers in what was largely an upward-mobile society. Political affiliation effected by marriage was ratified by a transfer of wealth appropriate to its importance in the general field of political and social relations. Divorce frequency and kinship structure were the same for rich and poor, aristocrats and captives, and were neutral factors in determining the amount of marriage payment.

The second phase began immediately after the war of 1898 and lasted until about 1930. At the beginning of this period the tribe as a whole was poorer than it has been before or since. Many cattle were looted in the war and for a long time there was little money in circulation. The majority of marriages without payment were contracted during this phase, and it seems reasonable to associate this in part with the poverty of the people. It is difficult to make any precise estimate of divorce frequency at this time, although we know that many Cewa and Nsenga women who had been married before 1898 deserted their husbands and returned home when British control was established. There does not seem to be any evidence for supposing that at this period women moved from one husband to another within the confines of the Ngoni kingdom more quickly than they do now. It is perhaps safe to say that the low level of payments was due partly to poverty but also partly to the general uncertainty about the future, about the kind of society which the White Administration was building for the Ngoni. Evans-Pritchard has stressed that 'It is morals that censure divorce and law that refuses to recognise grounds for divorce which ensure the stability of the union of husband and wife.'[9] The laws and moral code that had been enforced by the old chieftainship had been shaken by the defeat of 1898. The payment of bridewealth had defined legitimate expectations of behaviour, obligations and rights, within an organized system of social relations which had been shattered. While many Ngoni must still have regarded marriage with payment of bridewealth as morally right and desirable, they must also have been aware of the greatly increased risk they were running when making these payments, even if they had the cattle to make them. Rights *in uxorem* and *in genetricem* which were socially recognized but could not be enforced through the machinery of the State were hardly

[8] See above, p. 3, footnote 3.
[9] Evans-Pritchard, 'Social character of bride-wealth, with special reference to the Azande', *Man*, xxxiv (1934), p. 174.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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This attitude of resignation, while still very common, has to some extent been replaced by a more constructive attitude among members of the Native Authority bureaucracy. Chiefs, councillors and other officials have considerable political power and are encouraged to use it by the Administration, whose policy it is to strengthen the hand of the Native Authority.[18] Court members introduce changes in law with some confidence, although this is still done under the guise of a re-enforcement of a forgotten traditional law. Chiefs, under increasing pressure from their people and the Administration, endeavour to take action to modify social life in their areas. As yet political action is not very sophisticated, and the workings of the Administration are not well understood. In those fields of activity where Administrative interest is strongest, such as price control, food production, and the amalgamation of villages, the Ngoni response tends to be in moral rather than in political terms. It is wrong that the price of maize should be so low, the good man knows best how to cultivate his own garden, people in a village must live peacefully together. By contrast, in the field of marriage, where the Administration is comparatively disinterested, and where the wishes of the Administration, missions and Ngoni do to a large extent coincide, the bureaucracy has been able to act in a more positive manner. The thirty shillings law is one of the rare legislative acts of the Ngoni chiefs and people, and it is significant that the law was not made until 1944, fifteen years after the passing of the Native Authorities Ordinance. It is said that the law was made so that women could be punished for adultery in the same way as men. At the meeting at which the law was agreed upon, it was also decided that bridewealth should be a minimum of six pounds or one cow. Whereas the ruling about legalization payments is still remembered and increasingly followed, the bridewealth rule has been largely forgotten. This attempt to check adultery by increasing the legalization payment was in general agreement with the wishes of the Administration and more or less with the wishes of the missions. It was possible to envisage a decrease in adultery due to a clarification of rights *in uxorem* without any other major structural changes, whereas the re-introduction of bridewealth as a universal payment could only be envisaged in terms of a return to the patrilineal virilocal residential system of 'the time of peace'. It would hardly have been possible for the Native Authority to have restored the old system had they wished to do so. Ngoni village life is now part of a system wider than the chiefdom and there are other ways of acquiring wealth and status than within the residential system and at the pleasure of the Paramount Chief.

11. Marriage in an omnidirectional kinship system

We may characterize the change from the old order to the new

[18] Cf. Barnes, op. cit. 'Some aspects of political development . . .'.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR
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as one from a graded segmentary society organized on a basis of patrilineal descent and modified by political promotion to a society of villages organized on a basis of omnidirectional kinship. In the past a man lived in the same place as his father and in charge of the segment allocated to him by his father. Now a man lives where he can find relatives of one kind or another who may be related to him agnatically, cognatically, affinally, or by any combination of these ways. He is not even restricted to consanguineal relatives, as in cognatic kinship systems, for he can affiliate himself to some person who is linked cognatically neither to him or to any of his potential descendants, as when he goes to live with his father's wife's mother's brother. Genealogical connexion can be traced along all possible paths and there are no mechanisms by which one path is automatically favoured or by which the length of a path is restricted. In consequence the genealogical constitution of any local group of relatives is complex, and every man is a potential recruit to many local groups. He selects between the numerous possibilities open to him on the basis of his own inclinations and in response to the various pressures exerted on him by his siblings, his parents, his wife, her parents, and others. Once he has made his choice he can always change his mind and move elsewhere if he finds his neighbours irksome. His wealth, either in cattle or money, is his own and he can take it with him when he moves. There are no rights in land (with the one exception of dry season gardens) which might otherwise tie him to one particular spot. As with residence, so with marriage payments, the formal and informal procedures of marriages, and the values associated with them. In all, considerable variation is tolerated. Indeed, we may well regard variation as a necessity in this system, for every man is subject to a mass of potential conflicting claims and he cannot possibly honour them all simultaneously. Variation occurs not because of different practices by various sections of the population but rather because of different individual decisions. A man decides for himself whether or not he will pay bridewealth, or take a hoeing party to his wife's mother's garden, or be suspended from the sacraments for marrying a second wife. Yet although he makes these choices himself, he is all the time subject to social pressure from kinsfolk and neighbours who will be affected by his decisions and who therefore try to influence them. A woman is not quite so free as a man, but she too can make many decisions for herself, and her relatives must appeal to her if they wish to influence her, for they cannot force her against her will. Man and wife living together are in a unique relationship which is personal and non-transferable, yet they live in the midst of kinsfolk and the well-being of one relative is the concern of all. The quarrels of a married couple are a danger to the cohesion of the local group in which they live, while the longer they live together, fertile and peaceful, the greater the local solidarity.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

a hierarchy of rank expressed in the clan names, and this rank is evident in the position of houses on a village site, and the degree of authority exercised by the clans and the respect[1] accorded to them. In effect, all those whose ancestors were absorbed before the final break up of the main Ngoni group are recognized as having some claim to the name Ngoni. The rest, that is the clans found in the areas where the Ngoni finally settled are, or rather were, regarded as conquered or slave people.

We have seen, however, that there is a much wider sense in which the term Ngoni is used—that is, by all who live under the rule of the Paramount Chief. This extended usage is due to the prestige and honour in which the stricter meaning of Ngoni is held. It was illustrated in the instance of the Nyasaland men in Johannesburg, who all claimed to be Ngoni because they had discovered at once that the name commanded respect among the mixture of tribes to be found on the mines. *Indunas* and other leading men sometimes make use of this wider connotation when boasting about the large numbers of people owning allegiance to the Ngoni Paramount Chief, compared with the other petty chieftainships. 'All those in the country of Mpezeni are Ngoni. All are his people.' At the same time they make it clear that there is a distinction between the real Ngoni and the other subjects of the Paramount—a distinction which formerly was much sharper than it is to-day. All are the people of the Paramount, it is true, but in old days the majority of the non-Ngoni were called slaves. To this day the Ngoni when angry may call out to some one, 'Chewa, Chewa', implying 'Slave, slave', and be hauled to the chief's court for insulting language. There the chief will take pains to point out that there are no slaves to-day, and that no Ngoni must 'spoil the country' by insulting the people of the Paramount.

It is, I think, clear that there is a connotation in which the term Ngoni can be used with some degree of scientific accuracy—that is, to cover all those clans which are not belonging to the local tribes, or, in an even stricter sense, the clans of indubitably southern origin.

[1] This word 'respect' is constantly in use among the Ngoni. It implies both 'honour' and 'fear', and they sometimes use one word and sometimes the other. It really means, 'to give a person his due', that is, to behave towards him (or her) in the manner which his rank requires.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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said to be due to their definite knowledge of common patrilineal descent rather than due to the common name. At the other extreme are names such as *tembo*, *lungu*, and *phiri*, which are derived from the neighbouring tribes of the region and are very common and have no connotation of exogamy.

Prior to the arrival of the Ngoni descent-names were inherited in the matrilineal line by the Cewa, Nsenga, and other tribes of the Eastern Province. Under Ngoni influence, the rule was reversed and the great majority even of recently incorporated Ngoni now bear the same names as their fathers. Some people do take the descent-names of their mother, as, for example, a child born in adultery who is not accepted by its mother's husband, or one whose father dies young so that it is brought up by a relative of its mother. As with the Tonga of Mazabuka, some descent-names have locally alternative forms, and in one instance men and women take different names.[1]

Appeal is sometimes made for protection and help on the basis of a common descent-name, but this is not a very strong tie and is invoked only when no closer link can be found. The principal uses of descent-names are in polite forms of address and in connexion with beer-drinking.

Marriage Payments

The initiative in choosing a spouse usually lies with the man. A woman who takes too much initiative in this matter is regarded, usually correctly, as likely to be unfaithful. In the old days marriages were more frequently arranged by the parents of the couple concerned, but now this happens only when the man is away. Men who are on the farms or in the mines send money home to brothers or fathers with instructions to find them suitable wives, and to offer the money as the legalization payment. During the 1939–45 War this arrangement was continued by soldiers who were away.

The most important payment in connexion with marriage is that made by the bridegroom to the bride's father which I shall call the legalization payment.[2] This payment is the one that establishes unequivocally the right of the husband to damages should his wife commit adultery or be allowed by the court to divorce him. It must be observed, however, that damages may still be awarded to the husband under certain conditions where no legalization payment has

[1] The name *sulu* for a man becomes *mvula* for a woman in certain areas.

[2] *Cimalo*, no plural. Cf. Young, *Customs and Folk Lore*, p. 61.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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Grandparents

603 Children on weaning are often sent to their grandmothers to be brought up. The payments made in the marriage do not seem to influence either the choice of grandmother or whether or not the child stays with its parents. A child is sometimes sent to an old woman not its grandmother but related in some other way who lives in the same or a nearby village and who already has a brood of children to look after. This separation from the parents may occur whether the grandmother lives in the same or in a different village from the parents. Grandparents, and in particular that grandmother by whom a child was brought up, become confidants in later life. It is to her husband's grandparents that a wife complains if her husband does not fulfil his sexual obligations, while it is through the bride's grandparents that the groom should approach her parents when arranging the marriage. [606] The husband must avoid his wife's mother, but his wife's mother's mother and his wife's father's mother can sit on the same side of the house as he does, as though they were themselves married to him. When he is drunk a man can fondle the breasts of his grandmother, whereas to attempt to do this to his mother would be regarded as shocking.

593 691 578 While it is the grandmothers who intervene in the beginning of a matrimonial quarrel when the dispute is still an affair of the village, it is the parents of the couple, or if the parents are dead or senile the brothers, who will go to court to support them when the dispute has moved to the judicial zone of activity. Women seeking divorce on [586] grounds of desertion get their fathers to speak in their favour, while the absentee husband, who may be lost in Southern Rhodesia, will be represented by his father or his brother. Occasionally a father may give his support to his daughter-in-law rather than to his son if the son has annoyed his father as well as his wife.

593 571 578 Outsiders cannot intervene in the disputes within a family, although they may be called in to give their support to one side or the other. In particular the family of a man will not themselves take the initiative in bringing an action against his wife, however strongly they may rally to his support in a dispute where the initiative is taken by the wife's people. This principle applies even in cases of incest. For example, a [684] woman whose husband was away in Southern Rhodesia slept with her father. The husband's brothers wrote to Southern Rhodesia to tell him what was happening, but as in his reply he did not instruct them to take proceedings in the matter, nothing more was done about it.